

PEOPLE & THINGS: By ATTICUS

WE live in an age where the 'miraculous' is soon accepted as the commonplace. Yet we should pause for a moment and consider the part that television played in the visit of the Queen and Prince Philip to France.

We in Britain were able to attend almost every public function of the Royal visit, nor did we have to stand by a pillar or a lamp-post and watch the Queen go by. Wherever the Royal couple went in fulfilment of their engagements we went too. It is true that the crowds in the streets saw the Queen in reality but the illusion of the screen is a wonderful substitute.

There must have been moments when the Queen was weary with fatigue amid the ceaseless list of functions, but she was obviously sustained by the warmth and enthusiasm that greeted her everywhere. The miracle of it all was that by the magic screen we at home were allowed to accompany the Queen to France, and to be a part of it all without moving from our April firesides.

Was it by chance or forethought that following the radiant progress of the Queen on one of the gala nights the B.B.C. television gave us a documentary film on the rise and fall of Hitler? It would be a dull mind that could not grasp that lesson in history.

Ex-Prime Ministers

IT was both kindly and characteristic of the Queen to send a message of sympathy and good wishes to Sir Anthony Eden. Since he no longer holds any public office, her message was one purely of personal friendship, yet in that action she spoke for the British people.

Surely it is time that a Select Committee should determine the status and the pension of an ex-Prime Minister. It is utterly wrong that a man who has been at the head of the Government should be obliged, if he has no private fortune, to live in complete and frugal retirement.

'The Turn of the Tide'

LIKE everyone else I have followed the serialisation of the Alanbrooke war diaries in THE SUNDAY TIMES with the

closest attention. Now a new success is in prospect for Sir Arthur Bryant and Lord Alanbrooke. In the United States the Book of the Month Club have made "The Turn of the Tide" their choice for June.

Originally, I believe, the selection committee of the club passed the book by, but its sensational success in England caused a rapid change of view. Alanbrooke's candid judgments on American statesmen, soldiers and sailors are bound to cause a rumpus across the Atlantic, even if he does call General Douglas MacArthur the "greatest general of the war."

Sir Arthur Bryant, now in France, will have received the news with satisfaction; he put an immense amount of labour into the work. Our serial extracts alone would have filled an ordinary-sized book, and the original runs to something like a quarter of a million words.

British Union

HOW old is a man? That is the question which came to my mind while lunching with Sir Charles Ponsonby at the Royal Empire Society. As chairman of the Society he had just flown to London after a



Col. SIR CHARLES PONSONBY

trip across Africa that took him to Ghana, Belgian Congo, Uganda, Kenya, Tanganyika, Nyasaland, Northern Rhodesia and Tripoli.

If he had been to the Isle of Wight he could not have shown

less sign of strain and fatigue. Yet the merciless calendar states that he was born in September, 1879.

The massive building that houses the Royal Empire Society, though actually the work of Sir Herbert Baker, has that quality of Victorian solidity which characterises Northumberland Avenue, but it was no match for the bomb that hit it during the blitz. Now, however, it has been completely restored and in the true spirit of British sportsmanship they have placed the nose of the bomb in a position of distinction if not of honour.

Sir Charles tells me that the word "Empire" has lost much of its appeal in the colonial territories, despite their deep loyalty to the Crown. Probably some day there will be a compromise such as "The British Commonwealth and Union" but I find it hard to imagine an African declaring proudly that he is a British Unionist. Sir Charles did not offer any solution of this problem in nomenclature but was content merely to state that it is a growing difficulty.

Not Guilty

NOT unnaturally I would defend to the death the right of a newspaper to express its views on any public figure, yet I think that the Attorney-General, Sir Reginald Manningham-Buller, has not deserved the published criticisms of his part in the recent Old Bailey trial of Dr. Adams.

One might think from some of the Fleet Street critics that Sir Reginald and Mr. Lawrence, as prosecutor and defender, were engaged in a contest where a prize would be awarded to the winner.

It is traditional that if he is available the Attorney-General prosecutes in a trial for murder by poison. In that capacity he can examine and cross-examine witnesses and then, in his final speech, put to the jury the case that has been made for a verdict of guilty.

As a senior law officer of the Crown he must not only prosecute, but must also serve that principle that justice shall be done. The Attorney-General's detractors seem, in effect, to be saying that he should have made sure of the conviction of a man who has been proved not guilty on the verdict of a jury of his peers.

Tertius Lacrimans

WITH its eye on British support, a tourist brochure opens with a terse statement that Florence is a Third Programme city. To reinforce this claim the brochure reminds us that Florence has brought from its womb such famous men as Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Petrarca, Dante, and also Boccaccio, whose "Decameron" was banned by the townsmen of Diana Dors because they thought it dangerous to public morality.

It is unfortunate that this honour should be blazoned just when the Third Programme of the B.B.C. has been sentenced to dismemberment. No prizes are offered for readers' suggestions of candidates for the title of Home and Light Programme cities.

Jaundice Epidemic

NOW I have further news of the war against the uglification of the streets by the ghastly sodium lights. The chairman of the Welwyn Garden Residents' Association writes to me about the extensive use of these torments in this unique town.

With the ready availability of

equally efficient and economical colour—corrected mercury vapour or fluorescent lamps, it is difficult to understand how any responsible official or member of a local authority with the smallest sense of colour or beauty could select sodium lighting for residential streets.

Its vicious monochromatic hue destroys every colour it touches and turns human beings into jaundiced, corpse-like spectres.

Public indignation against developments of this kind will



HAMISH HAMILTON

be found locally throughout the country. Some person or body of influence and authority is needed to bring local opinion into a unified national campaign.

And a Chislehurst reader says:

The commons of Chislehurst have already succumbed, and their evening charm is sacrificed to fast cars. But this little crescent (with not a bus route or shop nor yet a telephone kiosk to profit from the misery of sodium) must also be subjected to the Council's enlightenment.

Grief for the little children abed in the yellow dusk! Sympathy for my more selfish sorrow as I see the horror multiplied by the reflections from an adjoining natural lake!

But that is not all. Publisher Hamish Hamilton, who lives in Hamilton Terrace, has informed the President of the St. John's Wood Preservation Society that he is willing to lead a protest march of the St. John's Woodmen and Woodswomen to the Town Hall.

As for myself, I feel called upon to warn the authorities with the words of the fairies in "Iolanthe":

Our wrath when gentlemen offend us,
Is tremendous.

No Names, No Pack-drill

TO the Prime Minister the task of advising the Crown on the succession to the Regius Professorship of History at Oxford may seem a minor and entertaining responsibility: to the University it is a major and deadly issue. For the one man who, if he were eligible, would stand head and shoulders above his rivals—Sir Lewis Namier—has already passed retiring age for professors, and among the younger Oxford historians there is a triangle of forces, whether of attraction or repulsion I would not venture to say, so nearly equilateral that it is hard to get anyone to quote odds about any of them. All the three obvious "possibles" are well known to the public through broadcasting and television, books and lectures, as well as to the academic world.

In these circumstances one naturally looks for a dark horse, not previously quoted in the popular betting. There is no obstacle that I know of to appointing a female Regius Professor, and an Oxford woman don has been spoken of as a hot tip—if she were willing, which seems doubtful. Another (masculine) dark horse is also said to be a non-runner, for health reasons. The affair is growing as complicated as a Trollope novel. And how Mr. Macmillan, who has a strong academic bent and loves a dramatic decision, must resist his part in it!